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## *Oil interdictions down since PEZ construction began*

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Pipeline attacks cost the Iraqi government a huge loss of revenue. When completed next spring, the 80-kilometer PEZ project—combined with improved security—will save the Government of Iraq an estimated \$30 million a day. (USACE photo by LuAnne Fantasia)

**TIKRIT**, Iraq – Although construction on the 80-kilometer pipeline exclusion zone project, or PEZ, only began in mid-July, the project is already reinforcing ef-

forts to deter costly interdictions.

“Since early August, the Northern Oil Company has been able to export oil through Turkey on a more consistent ba-

sis," said Maj. Antonio Jimenez, project manager for this Reconstruction project that will potentially save the Iraqi government more than \$30 million a day when completed next spring.

Jimenez, an Army Reserve officer from Colorado, is assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Gulf Region North district, which has project and construction management oversight for the USACE Gulf Region Division's Reconstruction Program in Northern Iraq.

The purpose of the pipeline exclusion zone is to reduce oil pipeline interdictions, improving reliability of crude oil delivery from Kirkuk to the Bayji Oil Refinery. Although the PEZ construction is still ongoing, the interdictions of the oil pipeline have already been reduced.

Jimenez explained that the \$28 million project includes six separate contracts (each for a different segment), developing berms, ditches and fences on both sides of the existing group of pipes, to help deter attacks on the pipelines.

A closely-related project, the construction of barracks for the infrastructure security forces along the PEZ by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense is also ongoing.

Jimenez said there are two reasons the pipelines are attacked: "Theft, for the black market [which some think funds the insurgents], and to simply cause problems for the Government of Iraq."

The pipeline is a combination of old, new and refurbished pipes (sometimes as many as 16 running parallel) critical to Iraq's economic rebirth. Some of the pipes bring crude oil from Kirkuk to Bayji. Others transport gas; product lines that take diesel and gasoline products from the oil refinery in Bayji back to the provinces; and export lines, he said.

Four of the six project segments are 50 percent completed and two are at 20 percent. But, Jimenez said the decrease in interdiction is also due to an improved overall security situation, as well as the year-long effort to upgrade the Iraqi security forces guarding the pipeline by the 3/7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion—recently replaced by the 3/6<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion.



The installation of 80-kilometers of berm, ditch and fence on both sides of the Kirkuk-Bayji oil pipeline began in mid-July and is already helping in a combined effort to deter costly interdictions. (USACE photo)

"The security forces along the pipeline are getting better," he said, "but it's a coordinated effort." The 3/6<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion Soldiers are out there every day with the Iraqi military units guarding the pipeline; mentoring and training them to guard infrastructure of national importance, Jimenez added.

"This is one project where we didn't have to wait until it's 100 percent completed for it to start benefiting the Iraqi people," Jimenez said. He added that gasoline deliveries to the provinces are up—progress due directly to the integrated efforts of the recently redeployed 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in MND-North, with continued and ongoing efforts by the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division.





The \$28 million pipeline exclusion zone project, or PEZ, develops berms, ditches and fences on both sides of the existing group of pipes, to help deter attacks on the pipelines from Kirkuk to Bayji. (USACE photo)

**Note:** LuAnne Fantasia is the public affairs officer with the Gulf Region (North) district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact her at (540) 542-1437 or email requests to [CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil](mailto:CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil). For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit [www.grd.usace.army.mil](http://www.grd.usace.army.mil).